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MUNICIPAL CONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENT
No. 38 ACTIVITIES DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS AT
T R I P O L I .

From: American Vice Consul

Leslie Gordon Mayer.

Leslie Gordon Mayer

American Consulate,
Tripoli, Libya.

Date of completion: November 16, 1935
Date of mailing: November 18, 1935

MUNICIPAL CONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES DURING
THE PAST FIVE YEARS AT
T R I P O L I .

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MUNICIPAL CONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES DURING
THE PAST FIVE YEARS AT
T R I P O L I .

Some information concerning the development of public works at Tripoli, particularly during the past five years, has been made available to this office by the Tripoli city administration and it is being forwarded herewith as of possible interest.

HISTORY OF CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

It appears that prior to the Ottoman domination of this city, while Tripoli was being ruled by the line of Caramanli princes, there were no public services and no city administration, properly speaking, with the exception of a "sheik el beladia", i.e. the head man of the village, who was appointed by the prince and whose principal duties seem to have been a supervision of the markets and of the crafts, a certain (apparently very slight) responsibility for maintaining cleanliness, as well as the duty of seeing that Arab women did not leave their houses unveiled. The "Sheik el beladia" also acted as unofficial arbitrator in cases of commercial disputes. There was no city budget, the sheik did not levy taxes, and the police functions were carried out through two "zaptiés", or native guards. Those accused of minor offenses as well as parties to commercial disputes were brought before the sheik who held a summary court, immediately giving his decision and, in cases of petty criminal offenses, seeing to it that punishment - usually whipping - was carried out on the spot. During this

period there were no written records kept, even communications between the sheik and the prince being by word of mouth.

During the early years of the Ottoman dominion, that is from 1835 to 1864, the same system was continued, the sheik being nominated by the "vali" or governor who, in turn, was responsible to the Sultan. In 1864 an attempt was made to modernize municipal administrations in the Empire on the basis of the French system of centralization and that law was followed by that of January 21, 1871, which was intended further to tighten the control of the central government over, and increase the efficiency of, the municipalities of the Empire. This system seems never to have been applied at Tripoli, rather was the existing state of affairs recognized and quietly permitted to continue.

In the last few years of Turkish rule there was a civil hospital, which seems to have been established as the result of Italian enterprise, a municipal pharmacy, a small "technical office", the aqueduct of Bu Meliana, which did not suffice for the city's needs at the time of its construction, and nocturnal illumination by means of oil lamps at a few of the principal corners. The foregoing seems to have been the sum-total of the municipality's activities, with the exception of the police duties of the sheik, mentioned above, which were apparently continued.

All this is now changed. Italian money and Italian organization have completely transformed the former Turkish village in a few years. In a very few years, for the majority of the improvements have been carried out since the World War and the uprising of the natives of

Libya which continued thereafter until 1931 when the complete pacification of the colony was officially announced.

The sea front has been transformed and extended to the east of the Castle, which formerly stood at practically the end of the city. Two and a half kilometers of sea front have been beautified by filling in waste land, building a street with wide sidewalks, trees, gardens and handsome buildings.

The interior of the city has also been transformed; the "new town" was in the building, and the problem of light, water and sewers was less difficult, but even the old Arab town with its picturesque but unsanitary houses and streets and suks has been improved by the placing of water mains, sewers, and electric wires, and the paving by asphalt or stone blocks of the majority of the narrow, winding, and formerly extremely dusty streets.

The "new town" has just been undergoing another siege of placing enlarged sewers, new water mains from a new water supply, said to be better in quality and taste than that now being furnished, and gas pipes. Many of the streets and sidewalks are at present in a none too pleasing condition as a result, however repair work is proceeding rapidly.

Some
One may find room for criticism of the apparent lack of inspiration on the part of the population as a whole in the matter of building construction and a lack of control or coordination by any governmental authority of the style used. The private buildings are either rather drab or cheaply gaudy. As for the public buildings, while many of them are imposing and pleasing to the present writer,

at least, there are certain self-appointed experts who find room for criticism.

There follows a summary of the works of beautification or modernization carried out by the municipality during the past five years. A map, in single copy, of the city of Tripoli will be attached to the original of this report; the numbers on the map will indicate the various public works described in the present report.

THE "LUNGOMARE" OR SEA FRONT

There has been constructed a promenade with gardens, trees, and a handsome retaining wall, running from the center of the city along the water front to the Government Offices, which are located at a distance of two and a half kilometers from the center. The work included the filling in of useless and marshy waste land.

No. 1 on the map.

a) Cost: Lire 400,000.00

UMBERTO DI SAVOIA PARK

This is also on filled in ground. It now has trees, flowers, shrubs and shady walks. It is closed to vehicles in order that children may play in safety.

No. 2 on the map.

Cost: Lire 700,000.00

RADIO BREAKWATER CIRCLE

This spot had to be rebuilt as the result of the passage under it of the new main sewer which empties into the open sea, and it was decided to beautify it at the same time. A small park with benches, transplanted palms, and flower beds was laid on.

No. 3 on the map.

Cost: Lire 100,000.00

a) Cost to the Municipality; Total cost was Lire 1,900,000. The remainder was met by the Office of Public Works of the Colony as a whole.

/ TREES

TREES

Those streets which have been repaired and will not need to be ripped open again for sewers, water or gas mains, are being planted with trees, chiefly oleanders, which started blooming in April and are still at it in November.

Cost so far: Lire 100,000.00

TRANSPLANTING OF PALMS

In many places grown palms have been bought from the native gardens in the suburbs and transplanted with their roots to various parks and open spaces in order to complete the picture and retain the typical African note.

Cost so far: Lire 200,000.00

TWO SMALL GARDENS

The small garden on the Corso Vittorio Emanuele and the Lungomare Conte Volpi are to be completed at an estimated cost of Lire 200,000.00.

Both marked No. 5 on the map.

SEWERS AND SECONDARY WATER SYSTEM

Up to a few years ago the city was served by an inadequate system of sewers which emptied into the port. This has now been changed and the principal sewer now leaves Tripoli outside the port by the Radio Molo and empties into the open sea. At the same time the water supply of a large portion of the city was overhauled prior to permanently paving the streets.

Estimated cost: Lire 5,440,000.00

The main sewer pipe from the point where all sewers meet at the radio breakwater on into the open sea, i. e. ,

/ beyond

beyond the line of rocks which form a more or less natural breakwater around Tripoli.

Cost: Lire 1,730,000.00

NATIVE QUARTER

It has been attempted to make improvements while disturbing the picturesqueness of the native quarter as little as possible, although it was often said that Italy would have to choose between the picturesque and the hygienic. It seems to have been possible to compromise to a great extent, but in some cases it has been necessary to tear down parts of the old town. Sewers and water mains have been laid and some of the impossible old buildings have been razed, particularly in the Bab el Gedid section.

No. 6 on the map.

Cost : Lire 1,300,000.00

LUNGOMARE PRINCIPE DI PIEMONTE

This used to be the principal waterfront and view of the port. It has now been modernized, the street has been paved, parapets and retaining walls have been constructed, and a strip of landscaped lawn has been planted.

No. 7 on the map.

Cost: Lire 1,600,000.00

PIAZZA D'ITALIA WITH FOUNTAIN

This large open place between the old city and the new was formerly an irregularly shaped, dusty market place called Suk el Hobsa (the Bread Market). It has now been paved, the most modern buildings of the city surround it, and there is a circle in the center, vaguely reminiscent of those of Washington, which has a fountain constructed of mythological beasts, half horse half fish, and cascades of water.

No. 8 on the map.

Cost: Lire 120,000.00

GAZELLE OR "YOUNG BEDOUIN" FOUNTAIN

This has become one of the most famous landmarks of Tripoli and from the artistic point of view that over which the most controversy rages. It represents a nude young native girl with a gazelle at a fountain. The whole is set in a circle of transplanted palms in order to enhance the effect of an oasis. [This being very definitely not one of the sections of Africa in which the natives go unclothed, the women in particular being swathed to the point of complete coverage, including the face, the sight of a nude statue is rather startling. The whole is probably too consciously "cunning" to have any real artistic value.]

No. 9 on the map. Cost: Lire 56,000.00

SUK EL MUSCIR

This short street has always been of a certain importance in Tripoli, if for no other reason than that the most famous mosque, that of the Caramanli, is located on it. It is a market street filled with native stores and booths, and leads directly into the Piazza d'Italia, but within the walls of the old city. These walls have now been rebuilt together with two archways in order to recall as much as possible the old appearance.

No. 10 on the map. Cost: Lire 100,000.00

MARKETS

Market of the Via Manzoni

The removal of the native stalls from the Piazza d'Italia, as well as the generally increasing needs of the city has caused the projection of three modern markets in various parts of the city. The total cost of these markets is to be about five million lire.

One market has already been constructed in the Via Manzoni. There is space for 76 stalls and the total area covered amounts to 2,870 square meters. Below the level of the street are large storage rooms, some refrigerated.

No. 11 on the map. Cost: Lire 1,500,000.00

The Market in the "Dhara" Quarter

This is a section of the city where many native artisans have their stalls and is also one of the newer of the native residential sections; that is, it is not within the walls of the old town. It is planned to construct a market in this region not only for the benefit of the natives but also for the convenience of Europeans living in the immediate neighborhood. The plans call for an expenditure of Lire 1,200,000.00. These will not be added into the total of "expenditures" considered in the present report.

No. 12 on the map.

Native Caravanserai

This is a region outside the walls of the old city where the caravans from the interior arrive with their camels and their merchandise. It is planned to build a large caravanserai and market for the natives here; the total ultimate cost does not seem to have been decided as yet and the work already done appears to consist principally in constructing a high wall and in providing a water supply.

No. 13 on the map. Cost: Lire 150,000.00

TRACHOMA INSTITUTE

Trachoma is one of the principal plagues of the country; especially, of course, among the native population. The Government is taking various measures to combat the disease, including the construction of special schools for afflicted children, as well as other far-reaching activities which do not come within the scope of the present report. The municipality has constructed a free Trachoma Clinic in the Sciara Hannuna.

No. 14 on the map.

Cost: Lire 50,000.00

CONSTRUCTION OF DWELLINGS FOR ITALIANS AND NATIVES

Despite the truly astonishing amount of building going on by private enterprise, estimated at Lire 58,000,000.00 for the past five years, the rapid growth of the city together with the Government's action in demolishing certain houses in the old quarter in the interests of sanitation, has created a shortage of dwellings in the city of Tripoli. Private enterprise alone apparently not being able to take up the slack, the Municipality has entered the field of home construction, especially interesting itself in the construction of small houses for the poorer classes of Italians and Arabs. These are scattered over various portions of the city and it is impractical to indicate them on the accompanying map. It is stated that five million lire have been spent so far in this work, of which one million lire is said to have been spent in the past year on Arab style houses for the indigenous population and another million lire on small European style houses for Italian workmen and the lower grades of government employes. These houses are

/ said

said to be much sought after because of their attractive appearance and their comfort and the municipality has been obliged to adopt certain rules of preference in assigning them; among the considerations are: number of dependents, length of membership in the Fascist party, and participation in the last war.

One interesting piece of work carried out by the Government is in connection with the "camp cities" which were formerly scattered in various parts of the city and were inhabited by Arabs of the poorest classes as well as by wandering Bedouins when these would come to the city. There were no sanitary provisions and the tents offered so little protection from the elements that the diseases of the respiratory tract and of the eyes which are prevalent here seemed to have every encouragement to attack the inhabitants. The Municipality, in order to put an end to this condition, has so far constructed on the outskirts of the city, and at a cost of Lire 500,000.00 a group of "Tukuls", circular huts built of stone and covered with a species of straw matting. Each tukul is provided with light and water, while latrines are grouped separately at a short distance from the camp. These huts appear primitive to the European or American eye, but the natives who formerly lived in poor excuses for tents consider that they are living in undreamed of luxury.

STADIUM

A sports stadium costing Lire 717,000.00 has been constructed. The funds were principally furnished by

/ the municipality

the municipality although the colonial government assisted to the extent of Lire 250,000.00.

No. 15 on the map. Cost to city: Lire 467,000.00

CEMETERIES

Work has been carried on in both the Christian and Mohammedan cemeteries, partly in the way of beautification and order and in the laying of water pipes in the Christian cemetery and in the construction of walls at the Mohammedan cemeteries.

No. 16 on the map. Cost: 450,000.00 lire

OSPIZIO ANTOINETTA BADOGLIO

This is an existing "creche" which has recently been improved and modernized at a cost of

Lire 200,000.00

ARTIGLIANATO

A project said to be of particular interest to the Governor General is the development of the local handicraft industries which specialize in silver, leather, ceramics and textiles. (The rugs of the country, which also enjoy a certain fame, are woven principally in the Misurata, Gadames, and Garian districts.) A new "suk" or market and workshops combined has been constructed near the entrance to the old city opening on the Suk el Muscir. Training schools in the various branches will also be represented here as an adjunct to the "Scuola Arte e Mestiere" which is located in the new city.

No. 17 on the map. Cost: Lire 640,000.00

STREET LIGHTING

The rate at which nocturnal illumination of public

/ thoroughfares

thoroughfares is being carried on is indicated by a comparison between the 1280 electric lamps of 60 candle power which were in use in May, 1930, and the 1618 lamps of 100 candle power which were in use in December of 1933.

Since the date just mentioned the work has continued, especially in some of the outlying districts, but exact data are not available. Some of the most important work has been the lighting system along the entire water front, as well as such work on the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, the Piazza d'Italia, and other centrally located areas. This has called for an expenditure of

Lire 700,000.00

NEW WATER SUPPLY

The existing water supplies of Tripoli - the works at Bu Meliana and at Hamadie - were capable of furnishing 12,200 cubic meters of water a day. The total length of pipe line at the end of 1933 amounted to about 49,000 meters. It was felt that with the continuing growth of the city, the supply would soon become insufficient and, other wells being available, new water works, pipe lines, and reservoirs are being constructed. The work is stated to be practically completed at an expenditure to date of

Lire 2,500,000.00

WORK COMPLETED DURING THE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1934 TO OCTOBER 1935.

Prison and Prison Hospital

A new prison was constructed during the past year at a cost of Lire 1,960,000.00. The cost of construction of the prison hospital is not given, it was constructed almost entirely with prison labor.

Lire 1,960,000.00

/ Insane

Insane Asylum

The insane asylum outside the city has been enlarged and provisions have been made to receive native patients as well as Italians.

Cost: 100,000.00

Vittorio Emanuele Hospital

During the past year two new buildings have been erected on the grounds of the hospital. One is the two-story infectious ward, said to be equipped with all modern conveniences and necessities in handling infectious cases with the exception of tuberculosis. This building cost Lire 1,800,000.00. The other building is a laboratory building divided into chemical, hygienic, and prophylactic sections, said to be fully equipped with the latest scientific instruments of all sorts. There is also a library and a lecture hall. This building cost Lire 960,000.00, without equipment.

No. 18 on the map. Total cost: Lire 2,760,000.00

General

Some of the most important work carried out during the 1934 - 1935 period, with the exception of certain tourist attractions which will be separately discussed below, has been the construction of sewerage systems and water pipe lines both in the old (Arab) city and in the new part of town. As sewers and pipe lines were completed the streets were paved. This is particularly important in the old section of Tripoli, where the general mode of life of the natives makes it necessary to make cleanliness a goal easy of achievement. In the period mentioned

/ such

such work was carried out in the Bab el Gedid, Sciara Hose Angelo, Hara el Kebira, Hara Uestia, Hara el Sghira, and Sciara el Baz.

No 19 on the map. Cost: Lire 450,000.00

Similar work was carried out in parts of the Via Vittorio Veneto and the Via Mercatelli in the new city.

No. 20 on the map. Cost: Lire 165,000.00

Approximately one million lire were spent during the year under review on various scattered beautification projects not separately mentioned in the present report.

Cost: Lire 1,000,000.00

STREETS

It will be noted from page four of this Consulate's Report No. 27, of August 11, 1935, entitled, "Libyan Highway Developments", (File 815.4) that the road budget of the city of Tripoli is ten million lire for the current fiscal year.

b) Lire 10,000,000.00

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

Probably the most important construction in the nature of a tourist attraction completed during the past year is the "Uaddan" Hotel, to which there is joined a gambling casino, two bars, a restaurant capable of accommodating 150 guests at a time, and a combination night-club and theater on intimate lines - holding about 200 persons. The architectural style of the construction may, it is supposed, be called "adapted Arabic": there

b) This sum will not be carried forward to the total since figures for the 5 year period covered by the present report are not obtainable.-

/ is a

is a tower resembling the minaret of a mosque, and cupolas resembling those placed over marabouts' graves. Despite this note of sanctity, that which is intended as the principal attraction to bring tourists to this city is the gambling casino annex which has four tables for roulette, two for trente et quarante, and two for baccarat. Officers both civil and military and all government employes are denied admittance to the gaming rooms.

One portion of the construction is unfinished and there is some speculation as to the use to which the vacant space will be put. The authorities themselves seem undecided but most conjecture seems to be to the effect that the space will be used either for a landscaped garden or for a luxurious turkish bath.

The cost of the construction as officially announced is given below; some private estimates place the cost at a higher figure.

No. 21 on the map. Cost: Lire 6,000,000.00

Mehari Hotel

The Mehari Hotel is intended to be a moderate priced tourist hotel. There are 250 rooms with a bath between each two rooms. The average rental is Lire 15.00 a day.

The construction of this is also imitative of the Arab style, the hotel being built around five courtyards. There are public readind and writing rooms, music room, a bar, and all modern conveniences. There is, for the time being, no restaurant in the hotel although breakfasts may be obtained. The distance from the main portion of the city and the rarity of the bus service has apparently convinced the management that guests would prefer to take their meals in the city.

No. 22 on the map. Cost: Lire 3,700,000.00

S U M M A R Y

THE LUNGOMARE OR SEA FRONT	Lire	400.000.00
UMBERTO DI SAVOIA PARK	"	700.000.00
RADIO BREAKWATER CIRCLE	"	100.000.00
TREES	"	100.000.00
TRANSPLANTING OF PALMS	"	200.000.00
TWO SMALL GARDENS	"	200.000.00
SEWERS AND SECONDARY WATER SYSTEM	"	5.440.000.00
	"	1.730.000.00
NATIVE QUARTER	"	1.300.000.00
LUNGOMARE PRINCIPE DI PIEMONTE	"	1.600.000.00
PIAZZA D' ITALIA WITH FOUNTAIN	"	120.000.00
GAZELLE OR " YOUNG BEDOUIN " FOUNTAIN	"	56.000.00
SUK EL MUSCIR	"	100.000.00
MARKET OF VIA MANZONI	"	1.500.000.00
THE MARKET IN THE " DHARA " QUARTER	"	1.200.000.00
NATIVE CARAVANSERAI	"	150.000.00
TRACHOMA INSTITUTE	"	50.000.00
CONSTRUCTION OF DWELLINGS FOR ITALIANS AND NATIVES	"	500.000.00
STADIUM	"	467.000.00
CEMETERIES	"	450.000.00
OSPIZIO ANTONIETTA BADOGLIO	"	200.000.00
ARTIGIANATO	"	640.000.00
STREET LIGHTING	"	700.000.00
NEW WATER SUPPLY	"	2.500.000.00
		LIRE 20.403,000.00

WORK COMPLETED DURING THE PERIOD FROM
OCTOBER 1934 TO OCTOBER 1935

PRISON AND PRISON HOSPITAL	Lire	1.960.000.00
INSANE ASYLUM	"	100.000.00
VITTORIO EMANUELE HOSPITAL	"	2.760.000.00
GENERAL	"	450.000.00
	"	165.000.00
STREETS	"	- - -
UADDAN HOTEL AND CASINO	"	6.000.000.00
MEHARI HOTEL	"	3.700.000.00
		LIRE 16.135.000.00

GRAND TOTAL LIRE 36.538.000.00

Source of Information: Office of Technical Works, Tripoli
Municipal Administration;
Geom. Luigi Melloni, Tripoli, Municipal Administration.

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NO. --

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1935 DEC 19 AM 10 28

November 24, 1935.

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
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REC'D 20 NOV 1935

SUBJECT: TRANSMITTING MAP OF THE CITY OF TRIPOLI WHICH
1-1055 GPO SHOULD HAVE BEEN ATTACHED TO REPORT NO. 38.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON

File map with original
for reference

AC

SIR:

I have the honor to inform the Department that I have just noted with great regret that the map of the city of Tripoli which should have been attached to my Report No. 38, of November 16, 1935, entitled, "Municipal Construction and Improvement Activities During the Past Five Years at Tripoli", (File 815), was not forwarded.

It is being sent herewith.

Respectfully yours,

Leslie Gordon Mayer

Leslie Gordon Mayer,
American Vice Consul.

DEC 23 1935

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File 815
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✓ Enclosure:
Map.

865C. 15/2

American Consular Service

TRIPOLI LIBYA

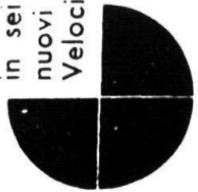
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Enclosure to unnumbered Despatch of November 24, 1935,
entitled, "Transmitting Map of the City of Tripoli
Which Should Have Been Attached to Report No. 38",
(File 815) from American Vice Consul Leslie Gordon
Mayer.

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TRIPOLI

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PER LA

TUNISIA

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ORARIO
OGNI GIOVEDÌ

p. 7	TRIPOLI	^	a. 18
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a. 12	BEN GARDAN		a. 12
a. 17 v	GABES		p. 8

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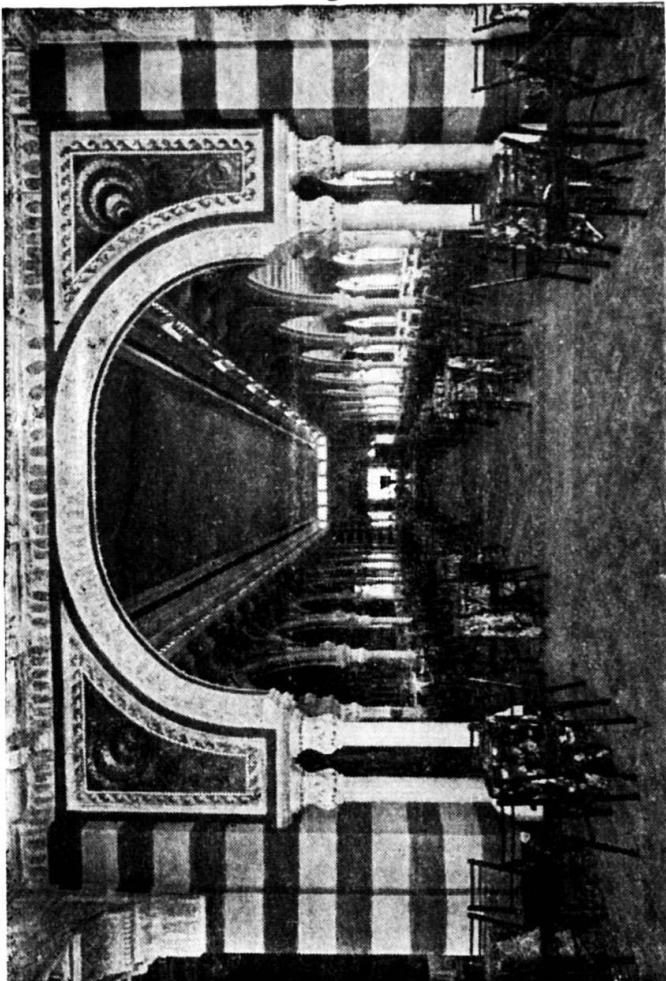
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PIAZZA ITALIA SECCHI
PROSSIMA APERTURA RISTORANTE

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Tripoli - Garian - Nalut - Gadames e viceversa

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